

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY ROME
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USCINCEUR
USLOSACLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 096492

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, NATO, PO

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES MODERNIZATION
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1. THE NATO INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL
IN MODERNIZING ITS ARMED FORCES IS CRUCIAL TO PORTUGAL'S
ASSUMPTION OF A MEANINGFUL ROLE IN THE ALLIANCE AND TO
ENCOURAGE ITS MILITARY LEADERS TO CONCENTRATE ON PROFES-
SIONALISM RATHER THAN POLITICS. RECENT DELIVERIES OF US
AND FRG EQUIPMENT FOR THE AIR-TRANSPORTABLE BRIGADE HAVE

BOOSTED THE SAGGING MORALE OF THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY. IN THE LAST FOUR MONTHS ALONE, THE US HAS TURNED OVER TO PORTUGUESE LARGE QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING 66 APC'S, ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, TRUCKS, AMMUNITION, RADIOS, ETC. THE GERMANS RECENTLY PROVIDED 18 M-48A5 TANKS AND THE US WILL BE TURNING OVER 3 C-130 AIRCRAFT SHORTLY.

2. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ASKED CONGRESS FOR AN ADDITIONAL \$27.9 MILLION IN MAP EQUIPMENT AND \$3 MILLION IN IMET FOR FY 79. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE PLANS OF THE WEST GERMANS ARE. ALTHOUGH THE ITALIANS AND BRITISH ARE OFFERING SOME HOWITZERS AND OTHER SMALL PIECES OF EQUIPMENT, THE OVERALL RESPONSE FROM THE OTHER ALLIES TO THIS NATO PROGRAM HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTING TO US, AND SOMEWHAT DISCOURAGING TO THE PORTUGUESE. THEREFORE, IT IS TIME TO

PRESS OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TO MAKE NEW OR ADDITIONAL CONCRETE PLEDGES OF EQUIPMENT FOR PORTUGAL. WE NEED TO RE-EMPHASIZE THAT THE PROGRAM IS AN ALLIED EFFORT AND AS SUCH IS A REFLECTION OF NATO'S ABILITY TO RESPOND TO A LEGITIMATE APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE BY A MEMBER STATE. CONTINUING PORTUGUESE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES PRECLUDE THEIR PURCHASE OF MAJOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

3. NOW THAT THE AIR TRANSPORT DEMANDS OF THE BRIGADE HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR, ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE
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FIGHTER-INTERCEPTOR ELEMENTS OF THE BRIGADE. IT WAS DECIDED AT THE NOVEMBER, 1977 MEETING OF THE AD HOC GROUP ON ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL AND TURKEY THAT MODERNIZATION OF THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE TO ENABLE IT TO FULFILL ITS ROLE IN THE BRIGADE STRUCTURE WOULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

4. THE MOST LIKELY SOURCE TO REPLACE THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE'S OBSOLETE F86'S, AND TO SUPPLEMENT THE G91'S, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM, APPEARS TO BE AIRCRAFT THAT WILL BE PHASED OUT OF ALLIED INVENTORIES. AN ALTERNATIVE MIGHT BE PARTIAL PURCHASE BY PORTUGAL OF NEW AIRCRAFT, WITH THE REMAINING COST COVERED BY AN ALLIED FUND ARRANGEMENT.

5. STRONG EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE BY THE AD HOC COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE THE OPTIONS FOR AIRCRAFT AS WELL AS REMAINING GROUND EQUIPMENT FOR THE BRIGADE. THEIR EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF NATO, AND PREDICATED ON THE NEEDS OF NATO, THE WILLINGNESS OF OTHER ALLIES TO SHARE THE BURDEN, AND THE OVERALL TRI-SERVICE PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED BY THE PORTUGUESE THEMSELVES.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON AGENCIES WOULD APPRE-
CIATE VIEWS OF USNATO ON LIKELY ALLIED RESPONSE TO A
SPRING AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS,
WOULD DISCUSS PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE EQUIPMENT NEEDS. CHRISTOPHER

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